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Juanita S. Dilley  
 Pocahontas County  
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BATTLES OF MARLINS BOTTOM AND  
HUNTERSVILLE

There use to be a covered bridge at Marlins Bottom (Marlinton) across the Greenbrier River. This was one of the bridges that came through the Civil War. Armies marched back and forth over this bridge and it figured in battles and retreats, but as it happened, never but once was an attempt made to destroy it an that time Mrs. Margaret Pooge Price was able to scatter the fire. That was during Averill's raid.

Years after the war, Andrew Price saw an old Confederate soldier, James Schisler of Greenbrier County examining the walls of the bridge. He said that he was looking for the loopholes he had used during the war.

So far as is known there was but one time that they had a battle near Marlins Bottom, though it was for months a fortified camp. The local people on either side did not understand what the controversy was about. All they knew was that there were soldiers stationed at the bridge and suddenly the bottom was full of blue coats, and that there was much firing and cavalry charging, that the confederates retreated and the Yankees went away.

Dr. George B. Moffett in telling about it afterwards said, " Well, I thought I had a fairly fleet horse, but with all those bullets flying around me, it seemed like Gizzard could not run at all."

The day that the Yankees and Confederates sowed the bottom with minnie balls was January 3, 1862..

The war broke out in 1861 and for a time Pocahontas was the objective of both armies. The strength of our militia (the 127 Regiment) was 650 at the beginning of the war yet before June 10th over 500 had entefed the Confederate army from Pocahontas. Robert E. Lee spent about two months here in the summer of 1861, between Huntersville and Linwood. For a time he used the Old Toll House at the end of the bridge at Marlins Bottom as his headquarters. (This building is still standing and was a few years ago made into a Tea Room by Mrs. Anna V. Hunter.)

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whereabouts in this county have been traced by letters he wrote while here..

At Huttonsville that winter the 25th Ohio was camped and with them was Major George Webster. General Milroy was in command of the forces and conceived a plan to let Major Webster have a chance to lead a small army into the Greenbrier Valley by way of Old Field Fork of Elk River to Marlins Bottom. It having been about two weeks since he had found the upper road blocked at Top Allegheny.

Webster entered upon his campaign with enthusiasm and he executed orders with neatness and dispatch. His little army was made up of 400 soldiers from his own regiment. They marched by the Elkwater fort and there he picked up 300 men from the Second West Virginia, and at Linwood he was joined by 38 of Brecken's Cavalrymen. He had loaded up his supply wagons and the army of 738 men moved south into the country of the enemy. He left Huttonsville December 31, 1861. On the evening of Jan. 2, 1862 he reached the place where the Crooked Fork of Elk turns to encircle the upper branch of the Gauley R. There they found the timber barricade cut into the narrow defile the fall before when Lee's army withdrew from the waters of the Elk to the waters of the Greenbrier. The trees were all cut for more than a mile. It was impossible to get his wagons through without losing too much time, so he left them there with fifty men to guard them. He took the path to the left on J.C. Gay's side of the blockade and he climbed the mountain early in the morning of Jan. 3, 1861.

When Webster got to the top of Elk Mountain on the Gay place he could look down the valley of the Greenbrier and see the tents of the company who had started to winter on the Ingen Patch, that part of Marlinton now occupied by the Union Tanning Co. Another company (Louisiana) was camped down the river on the west side where the old Price Place is.

Marlins Bottom was fortified against invasion from the north. The old road came up a little hill and dropped down to the bridge head. On top of this hill was a cannon. A part of the embankment can still be seen. On the east of the river on the bank was a trench of rifle fire extending the length of what is now the Tannery Row of tenement houses, with another cannon sited where the road topped the bank from the Marlin ford. These fortifications commanded the turnpike for a distance of about 400 yards, and made the road extremely dangerous as a passway.

Webster marched his command down Elk Mountain, through the loyal village of Edray,

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cross Drinnon's Ridge to the rebel settlement of Marlins Bottom. At the mouth of Stony Creek, he stopped long enough to send a squad of cavalry across the river, and they galloped down the east bank of the river and to the Huntersville road firing and acting outrageous to attract attention while Websters infantry came on down the west of the road. The cavalry coming in behind the Confederates caused them to stampede. Most of them made across the bridge to the west and fled into the woods. This engagement while a very noisy one resulted in no loss by death or wounding on either side. All they lost was their wind. It hardly halted the advance of the Federals. They crossed the bridge and advanced on to Huntersville driving before them some mounted Confederates. Huntersville had seen some big armies during the year of 1861, and when Lee left everything in charge of Loring, the Confederates made Huntersville their headquarters for all their activities in this part of the country.

Webster had left Captain Johnson with 50 men to guard the wagons at the barricade on Elks. Now he left Captain Williams with 50 men to guard Greenbrier Bridge.

When Webster arrived at the ford of Knopps Creek, near the home of Joe H. Buzzard, he found the Confederate cavalry on the south side of the creek in a level field, their line extending up and over a hilly spur that jutted out into the field. Webster sent a detachment up the mountain to turn the confederate's right while the rest of his command marched upon their front and firing became general on both sides. But the confederates seeing that the Federals were encircling them fell back and formed a new line of battle on Cummings Creek near Huntersville. The picket coming in from Marlins Bottom had reported the Federal forces to be about 5000 men.

Webster crossed the creek at Buzzards, topped the little spur and finding that the Confederates were in battle line on Cummings Creek sent two companies to his right through the woods, and the Brocken Cavalry to the left toward the creek. The rest of the troops advanced forward. After some firing the Confederates mounted their horses and retreated to the town. As the Federals entered Huntersville the Federals entered Huntersville on the west side the Confederates left by the east side. When Webster marched into Huntersville he found it deserted. Not a soul was living there. The courthouse, jail, stores and houses were all vacant. War had come too close to them, and the county seat and largest town was abandoned by its population. It remained in this condition for most of the war, and the soldiers used the Presbyterian church for a camp, and the houses were abused. Windows

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Nelle Y. McLaughlin  
Charlinton, W. Va.

were broken, doors left swinging. An old timer said that Huntersville which had been the scene of so much social life and gayety became one of the dreariest sights he had ever seen.

The people had abandoned the town because they had been told by the Confederates that if they were beaten the Federals would burn the town. When the town was captured Jan 3, 1862, large stores of army supplies were found stored there. There were 350 barrels of flour, 150,000 pounds of beef, 30,000 pounds of salt and large quantities of sugar, coffee, rice, bacon and clothing. Not being able to move anything fire was set to the stores and they were destroyed. The Confederates had fallen back to Monterey Va. The Federal loss was one man shot in the arm. The Confederates loss was one man killed and 7 wounded. The number of Confederates engaged was about 400 regular cavalrymen, and several hundred citizens recruited the day before, and two companies of infantry. In the meantime, at Camp Baldwin on the Allegheny, Gen. Edward Johnson was filled with apprehension. His scouts had reported the forward movement of the Federals to be about 5,000 men and Johnson thought they would circle around by Huntersville, Frost, and Crab Bottom and attack him from his base at Monterey.

But having destroyed the confederate supplies at Huntersville Webster turned and marched his men back to his wagons that night in the driving rain, having fought two engagements and marched something like 28 miles on foot. That was a big days work. It took one and one-half hours to drive the Confederates a mile, and he was in Huntersville two hours destroying supplies.

It was no wonder the local people did not understand the movements for even the Confederate commanders did not know what was happening to them. Websters return from Huntersville was what they had not counted on. They went on the basis that a big army was on the move, and expected it to march on to White Sulphur, Millboro, or Monterey. But the little Federal army marching so jaunty with their young commander had no notion of penetrating farther into the strongholds of the Confederates than any Union army had reached up to that time. Webster had swept the country clean as he went along, and had extricated his army with much neatness and dispatch.

On Jan. 6, 1862 they were back in their old headquarters at Huttonsville. It was as fine a campaign as ever a set of youngsters put over. Webster was there and back again

CIVIL WAR